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# The Brothers of Jesus

BY HAROLD LEONARD BOWMAN

*First-born among many brethren. Romans* 8:29.

CHRISTMAS is a time for poetry and song, for reverence and laughter, for worship and rejoicing. About the Christmas story there is a colorful picturesqueness, a lyric loveliness which should not be lost from our celebration. The sky song of the angels, the rude manger cradle, the simple but reverent shepherds, the stately magi regally-robed, the puzzled parents, the angry king, the flight to Egypt—all these clustering about the birth of Jesus have made Christmas a time of songs and lights, of generosity and worship, an occasion of human sympathy and tenderness to children.

How strange—yes, how stupid—that warring theologians have selected the birth of Jesus as their battleground and have made Bethlehem run red with the blood of denunciation and ire. Let us leave that to Herod and without contention cherish the simple loveliness of the Christmas story, seeking with reverent eagerness to understand him whose life has made Christmas a time of joy and singing. For in Jesus we have divinity set to music—God singing in the soul of man—singing a melody of such ravishing beauty, a love-song so exalting, that men's hearts have been set ringing with the echoes!

There is need for us to recall him whose birth has given us Christmas. So easily do spiritual meanings seep away from our celebrations, and the message of the Master grow formal and impotent for the celebrants! Christmas can so easily become but a tinseled display, an orgy of exchange, a welter of feasting, with the Master left standing outside the door of our festivities. Edna St. Vincent Millay, who so often catches the true significance of events, has written

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these lines, under the title, "To Jesus on His Birthday."

For this your mother sweated in the cold,
For this you bled upon the bitter tree:
A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold;
A paper wreath; a day at home for me.
The merry bells ring out, the people kneel;
Up goes the man of God before the crowd;
With voice of honey and with eyes of steel
He drones your humble gospel proud.
Nobody listens. Less than the wind that blows
Are all your words to us you died to save.
O Prince of Peace! O Sharon's dewy Rose!
How mute you lie within your vaulted grave.
The stone the angel rolled away with tears
Is back upon your mouth these thousand years.*

Let us at this Christmas-time roll that stone away. Let us permit the melody of Jesus' spiritual message to reach our lives and set the echoes of loyalty to ringing there. How eagerly did Jesus seek that response! He did not want to be left in isolation. His hunger for companionship in work and struggle—"Could ye not watch with me one hour?"—was exceeded by his desire for spiritual kinfolk who would share his spiritual vision, enter with him into intimate comradeship with God, join him in enthusiastic faith and ardent love. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother." To do the will of God, was the all-encompassing purpose of Jesus' life; whoever shared that purpose bore a spiritual kinship to Jesus, was, in Jesus' words, his brother. Jesus' career may be said to have been a search for brothers, a ministry in which he sought to awaken in men the quality of life and the type of religious experience that would link them with him in a fraternal similarity. Jesus was the Son of God looking for his lost brothers, seeking to find souls who would come to share in the brotherly life of God's family.

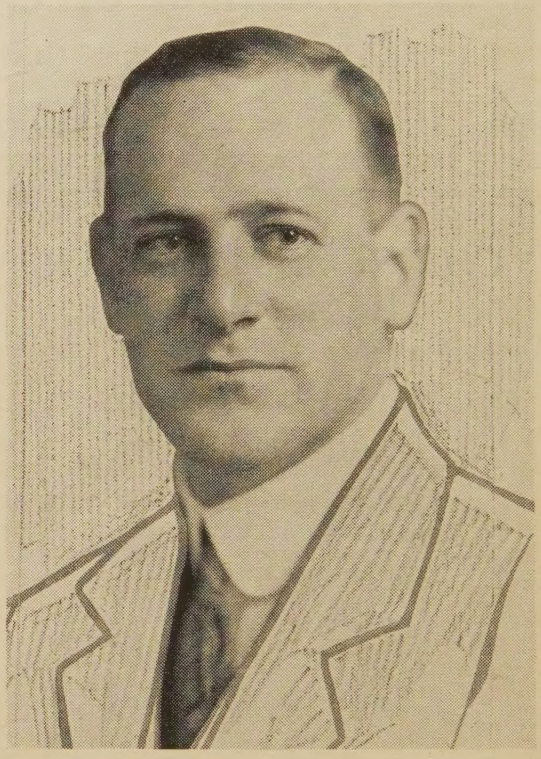
### *"First-born Among Many Brethren"*

Paul vividly grasped this idea and, in his letter to the Romans, clearly stated the concept. He described the travail of a chaotic world, awaiting "the revealing of the sons of God," awaiting the appearance of men who embodied the qualities and ideals of divinity within their souls. And then he proceeded to speak of how God worked in human lives, seeking to bring them to the likeness of Jesus, that "he might be the first-born among many brethren!" Jesus—first-born among many brethren! The manger-child, the first of a spiritual dynasty! The first Christmas the progenitor of many birthdays. Jesus the first of a long procession of Jesus-like souls! Jesus unique protagonist of the sons of God! Jesus, first-born of many brethren who bear his likeness!

This question confronts us as we prepare to celebrate the birthday of Jesus—to what extent do we share in that brotherhood of which Jesus is the first-born? Jesus himself made it clear—and Paul supports it—that the answer to that question is a matter of qualitative likeness, not of organization nor theoretical belief, nor ritualistic conformity. It rests not on respectability, conventionality or orthodoxy, but rather on this—how far are we willing to go along the path we see Jesus going? How much of the spirit of his life permeates our souls?

### *A Shared Sense of God*

We are brothers of Jesus when we share with him a sense of the reality of the divine. This experience is difficult for us in our modern age. A network of "things" encompasses us; our vastly extended knowledge leads to sophistication and banishes reverence



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and wonder. Our eyes behold such glittering movements and our ears hear such enticing sounds, that it is difficult for our inner eyes to see the higher values and our inner ears to hear the higher voice.

Yet it is only as we become emancipated from the thralldom of things that we may behold our relationship to God. It is only as we achieve this sense of adjustment to Reality that life can grow spontaneous and spiritual. Every day then can have zest and adventure. The whole world grows luminous, sacramental with the presence of God! Wonder and reverence come winging back to nest in our souls. God is the dominant fact of our lives! In his presence "we live and move and have our being." We are so related to the Eternal that shifting circumstances cannot wreck our lives nor destroy our happiness; we are living here and now the life eternal. We can with courageous activity rest in the faith in our Father's presence and comradeship. We are not now, nor can we ever be alone; our lives are inseparably bound up with God.

The lives of the brothers of Jesus not only share this

(From "The Buck in the Snow," published by Harper & Brothers, copyright 1928 by the author. Reprinted by permission.)

radiant sense of the divine presence, but they also possess with him the good life which is guided by the divine will. There is a way of life for every personality which takes that individual and lifts him to the very best that he is capable of achieving. In his circumstance there is a pathway which leads to a finer life for him and for all others. Certainly the will of God must mean not less than that. It is inconceivable that the will of God should call for wastage of powers, for the inutility of skills and the mediocrity of achievement! Jesus beheld a divine plan in the world which called for the greatest advance of all souls to their best, working together for their mutual well-being. He called this the kingdom of God! He, for himself and for all men, sought to discover the way by which men could best cooperate with God in achieving this goal.

### *The Good Life That God Wills*

Whosover seeks to know and to do that will is therefore a brother of Jesus! God has a will for our lives which we can discover not by searching dusty tomes of the past, nor by peering into the misty limbo of casuistry—but by the reverent, open-minded, eager study of our life situations, to discover how our personalities can be freed from their limitations, can achieve goodness without pose, truth without dogmatic intolerance, and character, energetic and contagious, without self-righteousness. Thus we become aware of the goal that is God's plan for us and we discover that in seeking it God is working with us and that when we apprehend it in some measure, our personalities achieve an enduring significance. Recall that outburst of Walt Whitman in which he, in his energetic, inchoate way, insists that not this insight into the divine will, but the lack of it, makes of life a dream:

> Give me, O God, to sing that thought!
> Give me—give him or her I love, this quenchless faith
> In thy ensemble. Whatever else withheld, withhold not from us,
> Belief in plan of thee enclosed in Time and Space;
> Health, peace, salvation universal.
>
> Is it a dream?
> Nay, but the lack of it a dream,
> And failing it, life's lore and wealth a dream,
> And all the world a dream.

A consciousness of a plan in the universe gives personal and spiritual values a significance, and when these values become our goal, the will of God takes on a new and a glorious meaning. "Whoso doeth the will of God is my brother," said Jesus.

### *The Power That Worketh in Us*

The life of the brothers of Jesus also grows strong with power. One of the paramount impressions of Jesus' personality was this sense of energy. Because of his commitment to his Father's will, he was working with the stream of creative power and not against it. He who works with the laws of nature possesses a power which he never can have who works against them. Similarly, the one who is participating in the evolution toward higher spiritual values will discover inner power in proportion to his commitment. This power is discernible in courage, in energy, in insight, in winsomeness, in fearlessness, in enthusiasm. The presence of God makes the personality spiritually incandescent. It glows with dynamic radiance. We experience what Paul called "the power that worketh in us." We can move through life "creating events not merely suffering them," to quote Marshal Foch. We can live with an inner energy which will not leave the body unaffected! We can taste a power which makes us fearless to endure, courageous to dare, and impossible to dismay. "Ye shall receive power," the words ring with virility, as we think of them coming from the lips of Jesus to the ears of his brothers! "Ye shall receive power!"

### *The Love of the Sons of God*

And then the lives of the brothers of Jesus will, like the soul of their first-born brother, become luminous with the divine love! "God, Thou art love, I build my faith on that," exclaimed Browning in "Paracelsus." Here is the basic pattern of the God and Father of Jesus! Here the leading motif of the divine will! Here the essential quality of the spirit of Jesus! Here the prime trait of all his spiritual kinfolk!

How selfish we are! How loveless! Abraham Lincoln was once walking with two boys who were quarreling. "What is the matter?" asked a man who met them. Lincoln replied: "Just what's wrong with the world. I have three nuts and each boy wants two." This passion for predominance in individuals, groups and nations makes of the world a welter of selfish interests, and generates strife, suspicion, antagonism and misery. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain, awaiting the appearance of the sons of God." A loveless world suffers in strife and suspicion waiting for the coming of the brothers of Jesus whose lives share his conviction that he that serveth is greater than he that is served, that splendor of soul is through ministry and not through mastery. This was the pattern of Jesus' life. He was not bent upon glory, comfort or wealth for himself; he was moved by a love for others and a desire for the well-being of the group rather than the individual. Love was the motive that colored his entire career. Love was the factor that sustained him in loneliness. Love was the spirit that kept him calm and heroic as he faced the cross.

### *Are We Brotherly Disciples?*

Are we brothers of Jesus? Has love for others become the prime principle of our lives? Has self passed from the center of our life's picture? Do we care for others not because they flatter our vanity, not because they are useful to us, but for their own sakes? Do we love others enough so that we refuse to misjudge their motives? Do we love them enough so that we are graciously considerate? Do we love others enough so that we are endlessly forgiving? Do we love enough so that we refuse to hold a grudge? Do we love enough so that we count no one as our

enemy, however inimical may be his attitude toward us? Does our love suffer long and remain kind, thinking no evil? Does love of ours accept the cross, and lose self, rather than draw the sword of unloving enmity? Among the brotherly disciples whose lives are the incarnation of love—Jesus is the first-born.

With what especial message shall this Christmas be invested? May not this season when we recall the birthday of our Lord, accomplish in us the rebirth of his spirit? Here is the life of Jesus, the most striking, potent, glorious fact of human experience—a life redolent of the divine—calling for comradeship—an ideal awaiting our realization—a leader longing for followers—a son eager for brothers.

Peary explained his persistent journeys beyond the Arctic circle by saying: "Something keeps calling, calling, calling—until—you return—spell-drawn by the magic of the North."

There is the lure of Jesus. There is the magnetism of Christmas. There is a calling, a calling, a calling to our souls. It is the call of our radiant Brother, yes, it is the call of our Father—summoning us this Christmas time to the noble life, the reverent faith, the indomitable courage, the triumphant love which he revealed in Jesus and which he seeks to impart to all men, so that the life which the first Christmas ushered in shall be but the first-born among many brothers! Come, let us by faith and love, live in our Father's world as brothers of Jesus, giving to God the tribute of our faith, and to Jesus the supreme loyalty of our lives!

# Christmas and Peace

By James E. Freeman

NOTHING in the recorded literature of mankind makes a more universal appeal than the idyllic story of Christmas. That the birth of a child in a remote corner of the earth, surrounded by scenes that were utterly homely and simple, born of a peasant mother, should arrest the attention of mankind the world over and continue through the centuries as the most striking and suggestive of recorded events, constitutes it a miracle of time. Before the manger that shelters a little child the world pauses in reverent awe and admiration. Artists, poets and musicians have found here in the incidents of the first Christmas day that which has fired their imagination, stimulated their thought, and lent genius to their brush and pencil.

Once a year as we turn again to the anniversary of this day the world is rejuvenated, the spirit of its generosity is stirred and kinship and friendship receive freshened inspiration and prodigal expression. The observance of this day revives memories, refreshes jaded spirits, dissipates ungenerous prejudices, gives freshened hope to the despondent, and interprets anew the deeper significance of that which came to man on the first Christmas day.

Beyond any in the calendar this day gives new emphasis to the sacred ties of home and family life. There is something about this ancient story that appeals in a peculiar way to the better things of our nature. From earliest childhood it is closely associated with scenes and circumstances that concern the nearest and dearest things of life. What it has effected in making the ties of kinship and friendship more intimate, what it has promoted of the spirit of good cheer and good will, who would venture to express?

### *A World Event*

No matter how we may construe its deep meaning, no matter how we may define it in creed and formulary, no matter how critics, high and low, may seek to interpret it, there it stands, the most compelling, the most winsome, the most enduring story of its kind ever recorded. It has been translated into every tongue and into the traditions of the races of mankind it has entered with compelling power. On Christmas day all our speculations and doubts give place to that which lays its fine claim upon the things of the heart. With our mighty wisdom or little wit we form our conceptions and philosophies and by them we determine our outlooks and our habits. It is these conceits of learning that create the divisions in our corporate life. The genesis of the world's misunderstandings, jealousies, ungenerous competitions and rivalries, springs from long inherited and often unreasoned and biased judgments. We live in a world of divisive influences and forces. Many, if not most of us, get our outlook upon life from the limited environment in which we live. Insular habits or ways of thinking are born of conditions that are narrow and restricted. Even racial differences and prejudices grow out of exaggerated expressions and nationalism.

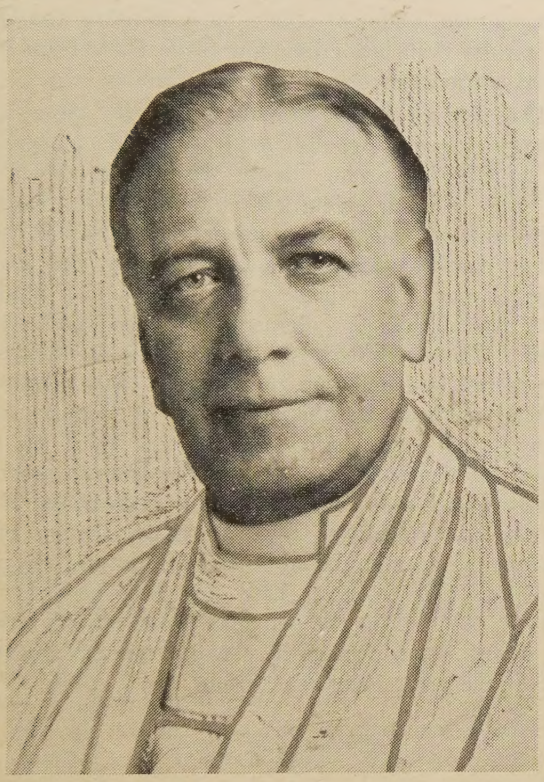
Our own nation, with its vast estate, has in one notable instance witnessed an internecine struggle that in itself represented conflicting ideals and purposes dividing a great continent of kinsmen into contending and warring forces. At times even the states themselves have disclosed such evidences of undue local pride and self-interest that they have seemed separate from the common sisterhood of commonwealths. East and West, North and South, representing a finely conceived union, have on occasion shown tendencies that were ungenerous and unprofitable to the Union as a whole. Happily for us we have entered upon a fairer day. More and more the unity and indissolubility of our confederation has become evident. Even the very polyglot character of our population, representing as it does the many strains of the elder nations of the world, has not hindered the processes that contribute to unity of design and fixity of purpose. Our solidarity is more marked today than ever before.

### *A Finer Spirit*

May we not venture to say with like assurance that a finer spirit is abroad in the land, and that religious bigotry and party strife are but shadowy memories of days which marked the childhood life of the Republic? We reckon at their full value the seemingly insoluble problems that confront us as a people on this

latest Christmas day; we are not unmindful of the fact that multitudes throughout the land are experiencing at this time privations and restrictions that lay a heavy toll upon their households and upon those nearest and dearest to them. In many respects this gladsome season is overcast by circumstances that render it less appealing and refreshing than in former years. Yet, in spite of these conditions, viewing our life in a larger and more comprehensive way, we still affirm that the levels of our attainment are higher than we have hitherto known.

We would not be rid of problems if we could. Our strength resides in our powers of resistance. Our



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prowess and our genius are never more evident than when strained and tested. Our progress has been most surely registered when hindrances and impediments were the greatest and our strength and fortitude were put to the severest tests. We can never forget what hardihood and courage was manifested by those who, in sterner days, made and preserved us a nation.

The central message of Christmas day is vitally and essentially related to the world's order and peace. The birth of the Christ child was heralded with the message: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, to men of good will." Ages before seers had prophesied the birth of one who should be "The Prince of Peace." In stately and majestic language they had set forth the high and holy purpose of his advent. They had declared that he would heal the world's wounds and usher in a day when men should beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning-hooks. They had conceived of every man sitting in security under his own vine and fig tree; they had visioned a world in which brotherhood should be its strong and dominant note; they had dared to believe that once the earth was touched with the strange power of a divine messenger it would yield to his sway and readily recognize the authority of his scepter. Utopian as the dream of these ancient seers seems; disappointed as they were of their hopes, yet generation after generation the yearning grew until at length expectancy found its high fulfillment in the birth of the Christ child. Centuries have come and gone since that eventful day and, while struggle and strife have followed in quick succession, still in the heart of humanity the yearning for a world of ordered peace has persisted. Our own age has been rent and torn by the fiercest conflict ever known to mankind—the shadows of this titanic struggle are still upon the world and its deep wounds are borne by multitudes who have known the bitterness of its Gethsemane. Generations yet to come will inherit the tragic results of this mighty conflict. Even now some nations of the world are fearful lest something more dire and terrible be visited upon them.

### *The World Demands Peace*

Paradoxical as it seems, in the face of this situation, the strong voices of those that demand peace have never been more articulate or more insistent than in the present hour. The chorus grows in power and volume as the peoples of all lands record their demands for an ordered and orderly world. Now as never before the world's commanding statesmen are engaged in pressing the claims that are designed to effect universal peace. Once men regarded such a conception as the iridescent dream of the visionary. Today it has become the determined purpose of statesman and diplomat. It is being wrought into treaties and state papers, the world over.

The cynic would have us believe that these are but multiplied scraps of paper—scraps of paper to be destroyed at the selfish pleasure and will of aggrieved nations. Economic strife and competition, we are told, lie at the very root of the world's disorders, misunderstandings and conflicts. The survival of the fittest must still be the impelling motive that creates strife and discord. The leopard's spots will not change, human nature the world over remains irrevocably the same. Selfishness, greed, national and racial conceits and prejudices, these will continue to the end of time. All this is the boast of the skeptic and the cynic. Yet, in spite of such forbidding and pessimistic forecasts, the world in recent years has shown a greater advance towards the ultimate goal of peace than was recorded in all the centuries that have gone before.

We of America feel the proud place of vantage we hold in furthering the high claims of that which this blessed day sets forth. Misjudged as we sometimes are by other peoples, regarded as we frequently are as a nation bent on naught else but supremacy in the world's markets, caricatured as we may be by those who think of us in terms of acquisitiveness, a nation of the mighty dollar, we still hold that in idealism, in those high things that make for universal happiness

and peace, we occupy a place second to none. There may be much in our history that would warrant the assumption on the part of those without that we are insular, arrogant and self-proud; our very unprecedented advance and development would, at times, seem to warrant this conclusion. That we have been busy and concentrated upon the development of our vast estate is true; that we have a genius for the things of trade and commerce that renders us conspicuous and a competitor to be reckoned with is equally true. Yet in spite of these palpable facts, when a crisis has arisen or an opportunity for altruistic service been disclosed, we have been forward to recognize and seize it and to give ourselves and our material things without stint or limit.

He is an unworthy citizen of the Republic who sees in its advance only those things that speak of material wealth and growing power. Only too frequently they who are the favored recipients of the nation's bounty, the beneficiaries of its incomparable advantages, are its sternest critics and traducers. We will not ally ourselves with those who see in the present trends of our life the dominance of that which speaks of greed and selfishness. There are wrongs to be righted, vices to be curbed, narrow views and judgments to be overcome, more of equity and fair play to be encouraged, lawlessness to be suppressed, and to these we must assiduously address ourselves. But transcending all these, the supreme quest of the world today is for that understanding and agreement that cultivates and contributes to peace and good will.

### *The Ideals of the Home*

Christmas day affords opportunity for a fresh emphasis upon the indispensableness of this great attainment. It further furnishes an opportunity for stressing again the essential place the home plays in the promotion of this idea and ideal. Laws may be made in halls of legislation, but ideals inevitably proceed from the home. However great we may be in wealth and man power, we may not forget that our destiny as a people is largely determined at the firesides of the nation. A clean and wholesome home and domestic life is a determining factor in those large concerns that are related to our corporate interests. However we may strive to attain the ends of peace through agreements and pacts, let us be assured that their validity and enforcement are largely, if not wholly, determined by those potential influences that proceed from home and fireside.

The prosecution of these high ends is not the exclusive function of diplomats and parliaments. Were we wholly dependent upon these, we should be the victims of hope deferred which ultimately maketh the heart sick. Statesmanship in its loftier attainments reflects the expressed will of the people. Our representative form of government reaches its highest ideals where its halls of legislation truly reflect the expressed will of its citizens. May we not believe that that will as declared in the homes of the nation, with ever growing volume, is demanding a new order in human relations, looking to the guarantees of world order and peace? No despot may longer, with selfish designs, rule a state or gain his place of power at the expense of his subjects. The Alexanders, Hannibals, Charlemagnes and Napoleons belong to an age that is forever past. The advantages of trade or the arrogant claims of individual ambitions furnish no legitimate ground for the waste of human life and the destruction of domestic tranquillity and peace. Even the exactions of an offended national honor may find their satisfaction in methods other than those of armed conflict. The sharp disputes of trade that once provoked disorder, riot and bloodshed are more and more lending themselves to methods of arbitration and pacific settlement. We are learning that calm and dispassionate judgment effects more salutary and lasting results than boisterous and futile threats and the proud affirmations of selfish independence.

The field of honor was once trod by those who believed that only wounds or death could compensate for an offended pride. Better wisdom has shown us the folly of such exhibitions and judicial procedure and calm discussion have taken the place of these earlier manifestations of fancied chivalry and maintained honor. A trained public opinion is a mighty force when once its judgment is invoked and registered. Universally today, public opinion, in no uncertain terms, is demanding that nations shall substitute judicial methods for the settlement of disputes, and that armed forces on sea and land shall be the guardians of peace rather than instruments to provoke war. Continued competition in armaments is a fatuous adventure that bows down the nations with burdens too heavy to be borne and creates rivalries and suspicions that engender hate and lead inevitably to conflict. At length the pen may prove mightier than the sword, when invoked by a world court representative of the great sovereign nations.

### *Victories of Peace*

In all that we are saying on this day of peace, we are mindful of the fact that peace has her victories no less than war. We are also mindful that a principle to be maintained must have the sanction of a great and unchallenged conviction. Men and nations do not resolve upon a new course of action unless directed and inspired by a great ideal. An ideal is ever stronger in its compelling power than that which is induced by cold logic. A great force is not set in motion by the persuasion of a syllogism. A deep-seated moral and religious conviction is the fulcrum to lift the weight of a burden that has long crushed and hindered us in our advance.

He who came to earth on that first Christmas day gave to mankind a new conception of human relations. His ideal contemplated a universal brotherhood. He visioned a world wherein the golden rule of mutual responsibility and good will should prevail with ever-increasing sway. He lifted to new levels the sacred institutions of domestic and social life. He enfranchised the mother and lent to the home a new sanctity. He laid down principles designed to change man's relations to his fellows, and for a narrowing and

insular habit of religious faith and practice instituted a scheme that embraced all races, kindreds and peoples. He stretched the curtains of man's habitation until its ample folds covered the dwellings of men the world over. To his exalted vision there should be no oppressive burdens, no destroying heartaches, no bitter disappointments and misfortunes to rob man of his rightful inheritance. He knew what was in man, saw the possibilities of his capacities and potentialities as man himself had never discerned them. In manifold ways he demonstrated the passion of his love and climaxed it by giving his life for a mighty cause.

The long centuries have come and gone and man still travels along the hard way of his quest for the consummation of these high and holy designs. Of late he has been appalled by the folly of his misdirected search and the futility of his boasted endeavors. This latest Christmas day will mark a new epoch in the history of mankind if its central teaching of peace and good will can be made more evident and the practical application of its designs be made more effective in human relationships.

# Is Jesus Essential Today?

By Hubert N. Dukes

*What have we to do with thee, Jesus of Nazareth? Mark* 1:24.

WHAT has Jesus to do with this modern age in which we live? He was an oriental peasant, living in a little subject land, ruled over by Rome. He was not a political leader. He was not a governmental officer. He was not a scientist, nor an economist. This is a scientific age; it is an age alive with economic questions. He was a peasant religious leader. Religion is at somewhat of a discount today. What then has he to do with this age? Why preach him?

One at times is tempted to think that we preach him too much. That is, he is dragged into every question without analysis and discrimination, which is not wise or desirable. There are ways of presenting him which well might give rise to question. It well might stir rebellion in the minds, not only of children, but of adults. There was the little boy who rebelled at Sunday school, because he was tired of hearing of this Jesus man. We can make his name too common. We can sentimentalize over him. We can make him an unreal figure. We can lose the effectiveness of whatever leadership he may have for us.

### *Jesus in History*

But since he has become imbedded in the whole history of the world, since to rub his name out of our civilization would require the burning of most of our literature, smashing of our art, the silencing of most of our great music, the avoiding of any religious thinking, it becomes obvious that we cannot avoid answering the question flung across the centuries by Pilate, "What will ye that I should do with Jesus?"

Richard Roberts has given us in a little book, "That One Face," the influence of Jesus upon poets such as Dante, Shelley, Browning, Tennyson, Francis Thompson, upon such writers and leaders as Ruskin, Savonarola, and Mazzini. He has made an imperishable impress upon these men and upon countless thousands of others. Such a one cannot easily be pushed aside by careless indifference. Pilate's question becomes our question. "What will *ye* do with Jesus?"

This question was asked by a vacillating ruler. It was addressed to the crowds. Typical of rulers, he had his ear to the ground. He wanted to avoid the issue. He put it up to them. They answered. It is always so. Ultimately what the effect of Jesus shall be upon a day and generation results from the answer given by the mass of the people. Rulers have always been made uneasy by the spirit of Jesus. They have sought to avoid his demands. What does the crowd say? What do we say today?

And there is no way to avoid this issue. When once a great principle is established in life, there is no way to avoid its influence. The law of gravitation was discovered by Newton. It has been operative all the time, even before his day and after it. One can ignore it. He can leap out of a second story window, but there is gravitation there just the same. Even though he did not know it, it did not matter. When once a great figure has emerged, such as Jesus, we can ignore him, but we cannot escape what happens as a result of our ignorance. We can turn our backs on him, but if he is in reality the light of the world, then we walk in darkness. If he really does hold the key to the future, we may not care to consider it; but if so, we damn ourselves.

### *"Turning" to Jesus*

Ought it not to behoove this age, that is so much at sea as to fundamental values, to turn to him with a more intelligent search? We reply, "But we do turn to him." And yet in such an ineffective way! We spend a few minutes a week, and yet in such inadequate fashion. If a new principle for making steel were discovered, and the steel makers made no more thorough search for an understanding of the process than we make for the underlying principles of Jesus' life, I'm afraid they would continue to make steel the old way. By some of our haphazard methods, we have largely brought the religion of Jesus into disrepute with large numbers of people—many of whom should be with us in the search. A generation which spends hours at the bridge table, and hasty minutes in religious thought and prayer, will become much more able in the playing of bridge than it is in providing Christian dynamic for our social problems. It will have an impoverished conception of this personality who has enriched the minds and hearts of poet, philosopher, and saint.

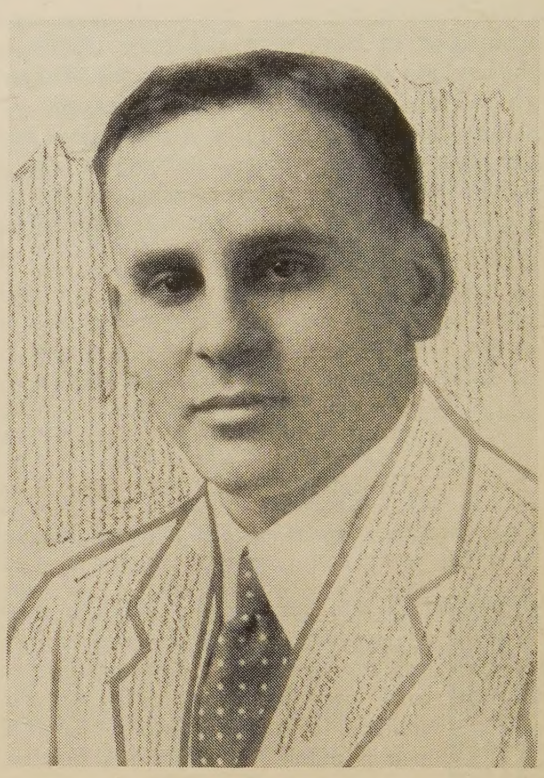
Pilate's question has been answered. We have

thought to do magnificently by Jesus. We have honored him, we have admitted him to our guest room. We have brought garlands of flowers, music, and song, with which to pay tribute to him. We have sought to crown him with many crowns, and to lay at his feet our finest gifts—fine church buildings, beautiful altars, elaborate rituals, splendid oratorios. We have paid him our choicest honors. We have brought elaborate testimonials, beautifully written as a tribute to him. The choicest ideals and names of all times we have called him—Messiah, Christ, Son of God, Savior. We have called him King, Prince, Potentate, Ruler, Lord, Master. We have spread before him our tenderest devotional statements, in loving tribute. We have been willing to recognize the great appeal of his nature, his lofty moral tone, his sinlessness, his beauty. Someone has said that if Lincoln, Washington, Napoleon, should walk into the room, men would instinctively stand, but if Jesus should come into the room, they would fall at his feet. I'm not sure which Jesus would consider the greater tribute.

*Where Jesus Is Needed*

And yet a strange thing has happened. All the time that we have been keeping Jesus in the guest room, and heaping upon him our tributes, he has not been satisfied. He has been asking to be allowed to come into the living room. He has asked that we admit him to the council table. He has not even asked that we have a table with a head to it, but that we make it a round table, at which all would be equal—that we call in all men, all colors, all races, all conditions, and there together talk over the problems of life. But we have not responded. We have been willing to talk over our charities with him, and give him the credit for inspiring many of our kindly actions, but we have not invited him in, to talk over the questions of justice which might make charity unnecessary. We have been willing to talk over the salvation of men's souls with him, but we have not been willing to talk over the conditions under which they live which have been destroying their souls. And now a strange thing has happened. Suddenly we have discovered that he is not in the guest room. He has departed. Not being satisfied with being a guest, with all the adoration and tributes, he has left, and we aren't at all certain where he is! There are priests still standing guard over the guest room. They have not awakened to the fact that he is not there. There are ardent defenders of the archives where we have kept all our theological tributes to him, but they have not found that they were lifeless, failing to give inspiration and direction to the masses of people.

And yet we have discovered that we need him. We need him at our council tables. At least we need to consider what he has to say. We have become perplexed at our state of affairs. We have become concerned over our loss of values. We have been wondering at our loss of enthusiasm and confidence in our future. We are disturbed at the disorders which face us. We are not so certain of ourselves, and our abilities to meet our problems without a higher inspiration. We are wondering about our materialistic civilization without a soul. Perhaps he hasn't the leadership! Maybe this peasant Galilean who consorted with fishermen doesn't know anything about this complicated age in which we live, but we have suddenly remembered that we never invited him in to our discussions, we never gave him a chance to tell what he knew. But we recall that a group of men in his day said to him, one day when he spoke about leadership: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life." And we recall that a modern writer, a man



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who never spent much time in adoration of anything, George Bernard Shaw, has said that there is no way out, except Jesus' way. We are growing conscious of our need to hear what his words of counsel are.

Where shall we find him, if we would go and bring him back? When we look around to discover him, we find that the masses don't know much about him. They have a kind of vague recollection that he ought to be in the guest room of our civilization, in our fine churches, in our creeds and hymns of adoration. The Bishop of Upsala, a few years ago, told us that in Holland, the glorious country of strong Christian characters long ago, one meets cultivated and religious people with a growing lack of Bible knowledge.

Can we find Jesus on the campus of our schools, among the students? Dr. McCall, a brilliant minister of Berkeley, California, tells about a meeting with a group of students and putting up to them the appeal of Christ. He reports: There was no real sense of the value of Jesus; indeed, there seemed to be no knowledge of him that might be the basis of an

estimate. Had their knowledge of Plato been no more substantial, not any one of them could have hoped to survive even an elementary examination on the subject. Other student leaders say the same thing. Where shall we find him that we might bring him back?

We do not find Jesus often among our political or financial or business leaders. They have seldom invited Jesus in to talk over matters with them about the round table. In fact, they have been very frank at times with those who stood in the pulpits, and have said emphatically that religion and business and religion and politics do not mix. They are frank to tell you that the Golden Rule will not work in industry.

Our professional patriots do not seem to understand his message. To love one's enemies and to rely on good will, to them is simply so much twaddle, and the one who advocates it is not much less than a traitor. In "Wings Over Europe," the Minister of the Navy expresses his dismay in being asked to scrap the battleships which he has watched develop. He loves them and is proud of them. . . . "And now," he says, "I am bidden to scrap them in the name of a Christ in whom I do not believe, and in disloyalty to Jehovah, God of Battles, in whom I do believe."

### *What Would We Do With Him?*

Where then shall we find him? It all depends upon what we want with him, whether we shall find him. If we want to find him to bring him back into the guest room, we shall not find him. He will elude us. There are some who feel that we shall meet our problems by returning to a new and better adoration. There are attempts to revise the order of the service, to change the setting of the church, with altar in center and pulpit on side. This has its place, but we shall not find him merely to adore him. But if we wish him back in the center of our lives—not in the guest chamber, but in the living room; not merely in our rooms of charity, but in our chambers of justice—it we want him, not merely in our churches, but in our banks, our legislative halls, we can find him. Where? Frank Mason North tells us in the song we sing:

> Where cross the crowded ways of life,
> Where sound the cries of race and clan,
> Above the noise of selfish strife,
> We hear thy voice, O Son of Man.

Wherever there is injustice, where there are lives going to pieces because of our inability to adjust our economic order, so that people can have a comfort level, where lives are impoverished by lack, where there are men incarcerated in our prisons because of our unwise direction of affairs, and our failure to share the riches of our life, there he is, not dispensing charity merely, but giving himself in fellowship, giving himself in intelligent sympathy which seeks to change the whole order of life in which they live. He is there wherever personality is being broken down as our system of life is doing it.

How shall we find him? As we go forth to build our order of life with him at the center, we shall find him in every intelligent effort to bring justice, life, hope, to replace injustice, greed and selfishness.

We crucify Jesus by our indifference to him. He never meant that men should be indifferent. And when they have really known him, they have either loved him and desired to follow him, or they have hated him and opposed him. If we neither love him nor oppose him, we possibly have never come to know him. He has always gone to the very center of evil and asserted a kind of life all compelling, with which there can be no compromise. Today we hardly know him and crucify him with our indifference. Studdert Kennedy has made that very vivid for us in the oft quoted poem in which he has pictured Jesus neglected on the city streets, crouching against the wall and crying for Calvary.

We are also indifferent to those causes and situations in which we can find Jesus. As Raymond Kresensky puts it:

> I looked for Christ on Madison Street
> Where men went by with stumbling feet,
> Where heads were bowed in the darkness there
> Of gray clouds hanging low in the air.
> I looked for him, a vision of white—
> But gay burlesques with their crimson light
> Have led my steps to a darker place
> Where smoke of passion hid Christ's face.
> I looked for Christ in the hidden skies,
> A flaming vision to blind my eyes—
> While Christ walked by with stumbling feet,
> Along with the men of Madison Street.

There is no greater, no more heroic challenge, than that of thinking through the problems of modern society according to Jesus' spirit and teachings. It is a challenge, however, which will be of little value unless real effort is put into the task. If it is done, we will discover a dynamic Christianity so far different from that which we now have that we would not recognize it as the same thing. As Ernest Fremont Tittle has recently said: "Not far distant, I think, is the day when the church will be compelled either openly to repudiate much that Jesus believed and taught or boldly to endose his fundamental positions. If it does the latter, it probably will be subjected to persecution. If it does the former, it certainly will be subjected to damnation, for it will be required to range itself with the possessors of privilege, against the hopes and aspirations of the unprivileged masses of mankind."

What will *ye* do with Jesus?

## *Evaluation*

> BORN in a borrowed cattle shed,
> And buried in another's tomb;
> Small wonder our complacency
> Leaves such a One no room!
>
> But castles were as poor as sheds
> Until that Prince was born on earth,
> And tombs were mockeries of hope
> Before He changed death into birth!

ELINOR LENNEN.

# The Rewards of Christianity

By Morgan Phelps Noyes

*Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee: what shall we have therefore? Matthew* 19:27.

HAT was a very human question. Peter was spokesman for a group of men who had made great sacrifices for the cause of Christ. Quite naturally they wanted to know what they were going to get out of it. That question is one which lurks at the back of many a man's mind today. Christianity makes great demands upon its adherents—demands upon their time, their spiritual loyalty, their character, their resources. Many a man wants to know if Christianity can guarantee any returns commensurate with what it asks. "We have forsaken all and followed: what shall we have therefore?"

Different generations have emphasized different answers to that question. The Middle Ages would certainly have put the answer like this: The rewards of the Christian life consist in felicity in a world to come. Our older hymns are filled with pictures of that brighter world than this.

> They stand, those halls of Zion,
> All jubilant with song,
> And bright with many an angel
> And all the martyr throng.
> The Prince is ever in them;
> The daylight is serene;
> The pastures of the blessed
> Are decked with glorious sheen.

We believe that today. We do not try, perhaps, to paint pictures of the concrete details of the spiritual world, but we believe in the immortality of the life with God. The modern Christian, however, does not want to put his emphasis exclusively upon a future life. The Christian of the twentieth century does not believe less than did his predecessors in the felicity of the world to come, but he is more deeply concerned about a wider distribution of happiness in the world that now is.

With the Protestant Reformation a new emphasis appeared in the answers to the old question concerning the rewards of the Christian life. Without diminishing the interest in a world to come, Protestant Christianity added this conviction: The rewards of the Christian life consist at least in part in worldly prosperity. There is a cluster of prudential maxims which have become a part of the common speech of Protestant Christianity. "Godliness is profitable." "Honesty is the best policy." "Be good and you'll be happy." There is a measure of truth in them all. But they do not strike fire with the Christian of our day as they once did. The modern Christian cannot forget that Jesus himself was a glaring exception to all these rules. He had nowhere to lay his head. His honesty was rewarded with a Cross. He was known as a Man of Sorrows, not unacquainted with grief. The highest Christian character is never based upon the hope of material reward. It is willing to do good, hoping for nothing in return. There is truth behind those often quoted maxims, but it is not the whole truth.

### *Creating a Livable World*

In our own time a new emphasis has come into our attitude to this familiar question. Many people are saying: The rewards of the Christian life are to be found in the fact that it makes the world run more smoothly. You and I have been fated to live in an era of great upheavals. We have seen the nations at each other's throats. We have seen the world's industrial life rocked by upheavals from within. We hear today the ominous rumble of racial antagonisms, the outcome of which no man can predict. We are told that if we could get genuine Christianity into these human relationships, the world would run smoothly. That is true. I see no hope for the world except in Christianity. International conferences and social reforms can never of themselves create a livable world unless there is a spirit not very unlike the spirit of Jesus at the heart of them. Christianity will make the world run more smoothly. But Christianity is something more than a lubricating oil to ease the world's creaking machinery. George Tyrrel, with his customary insight, once said, "When every one has been adequately fed, clothed, and sheltered, the question still remains, what to do with life?" A smoothly running world inhabited by people who do not know what life is leaves the fundamental needs of men untouched. Christianity is a lubricant, a pacifier, a reconciler of man to man. But even that is not the whole story.

What then, are the rewards of Christian living which appeal most strongly to thoughtful people today? Let me name four.

I

One of the great rewards of Christianity is a *life which satisfies the deepest impulses of our nature.* Shortly before the last expedition attempted to climb Mt. Everest, one of the leaders (who was later to perish near the summit) was addressing a gathering in Boston. He was asked why he thought it worth while to attempt so dangerous an ascent. His reply has already become a classic:

"We shall not bring back a single bit of gold or silver, not a gem, nor any coal or iron. We shall not find a foot of earth that can be planted with crops to raise food. If you cannot understand that there is something in man which responds to the challenge of this mountain, and goes out to meet it, that the struggle is the struggle of life itself upward and forever upward, then you won't see why we go."

"We needs must love the highest when we see it." We do not altogether understand why, but we are made that way. There has been stamped upon the conscience of the world one Life which could say to other men, without pretense or insincerity, "Be ye

perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Why should we take the risks and endure the struggle of trying to fulfill that impossible command? Simply because, having seen that Life, nothing else will do for us. "There is something in man" which responds to the challenge of the kind of life that Jesus lived. "There is something in man" which is unsatisfied save as we are struggling "upward and forever upward." That is a truth to be experienced rather than explained. A great symphony does not need any argument to defend it. We are content to enjoy it. A rich friendship is its own reward—true friends are not forever

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asking what they get out of it. Discipleship to Jesus is a way into a quality of life which in itself is the finest thing life holds. It is the only kind of life which satisfies the deepest impulses of our beings.

II

A second reward of Christianity is *a task which uses up all that one has.* In his "Brothers Karamazoff" Dostoievsky makes his Grand Inquisitor say: "The secret of man's being is not only to live, but to have something to live for." It will always be a deep marvel that one man should ever have set himself to the task to which Jesus addressed himself—the task of transforming a selfish world into a kingdom of God, a great brotherhood permeated with loyalty to one Fatherhood. No one without a conviction of available divine resources would ever have confronted a task like that. Men and women without some faith in a divine will at work in the world are apt to grow faint-hearted when they face that task today.

Sir James Barrie once said that the greatest glory that had ever come to him was to be swallowed up in London as a struggling author, with no means of subsistence, and "the fun of working till the stars went out." We might disagree as to the enjoyability of uncertain means of subsistence, but does life ever offer any gift much better than the privilege of spending and being spent in the service of some cause in which you believe with all your heart and strength?

Three years ago a trolley accident resulted in the death of Dr. S. Hall Young, a pioneer Presbyterian missionary who had spent fifty years at hard work in Alaska. He had scaled peaks and mapped glaciers with John Muir. He had crossed Chilcoot Pass with the Klondike Stampede, he had driven his dogs up and down the snowfields of the northern territory, he had planted churches and missions at the end of many trails. When, at the age of eighty, he died at the hands of the civilization which was the only thing he feared, some unfinished verses were found in his pocket:

Let me die working,
Still tackling plans unfinished, tasks undone.
Clean to its end, swift may my race be run,
No lagging steps, no faltering, no shirking;
Let me die working.

Let me die thinking,
Let me fare forth still with an open mind,
Fresh secrets to unfold, new truths to find,
My soul undimmed, alert, no question blinking.
Let me die thinking.

Let me die giving
The substance of life for life's enriching,
Time, things and self to heaven converging,
No selfish thought—loving, redeeming, living,
Let me die giving.

Can life offer any gift much better than a cause which calls out all one's powers like that? That is one of the rewards of Christian service.

III

A third reward of Christianity is *an interpretation of the universe which satisfies the whole mind.* Thinking men have always been driven to try to find some explanation of the mystery of life, its source, its meaning, its destiny. One thing is certain today—no little explanation can help us interpret the universe which we now know. The more we learn about the immeasurable heavens above us, about the intricacies of the atoms all about us, about the hidden recesses and the devious secrets of personality, the more nearly overwhelmed we are with a sense of the vastness and the incredible minuteness of detail which go to make up this universe of which we are so strangely made a part. Some one recently remarked that today we do not want a mysterious God whom we cannot understand. But that is exactly what we do want. No little home-made deity can give us a satisfying interpretation of this universe which modern knowledge has revealed. Only a great theory of God—great enough to include mysteries—can help us today. In one of the standard magazines Mr. Elmer Davis stated a perplexity which is a common one in our time: He says:

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork—such handiwork and such glory as could not have been conceived till the telescope and the spectroscope had enabled man to search the depths of space. But where is the God that pitieth them that fear him like as a Father pitieth his children? . . . It seems ridiculous to suppose that the Immanent Order of an organism whose cells are thousands of light years wide is greatly concerned whether, on the microscopic satellite of a remote and inconsiderable star, kings rule justly, or Methodists dance. There may be a God who cares about such things, but science as such tells us nothing about him—whereas to the God of everything, it bears clear witness."

Mr. Davis is quite right in contending that we never can learn from nature about a God who cares. But nature is not the whole universe. Here is also humanity, and the peak and climax of humanity in Jesus of Nazareth. The Christian faith has always rested upon a daring conviction—a daring hypothesis, if you like—that the order revealed by nature, and the love revealed by Jesus are two aspects of one Spirit of Life whom we call God. There are realms of mystery within that faith—realms where we still must wait for larger knowledge. But that is an interpretation of the universe which is large enough for a stupendous universe. When Jesus faced the world's brutality and the mystery of pain upon the Cross and still looked into the unseen saying "Father," he gave us the only interpretation of life which can ever satisfy the whole mind. To share that faith is one of the richest experiences of life.

IV

The supreme reward of Christian living, however, is more than a theory. It is *a fellowship with God which satisfies the whole man.* It is one thing to believe in God; it is quite another thing to trust one's self completely and unreservedly to God. Belief in God is a matter of the intellect. Trust in God involves the whole life. Belief in God results in a creed. Trust in God results in a personal fellowship. Belief in God is a good thing. But belief in God which goes on to become trust in God is about the best thing in life.

People experience the fellowship of God in ways that vary with their differing temperaments. The mystic has his way of feeling that God is near. The thinker is convinced that he is in contact with God in the truths which command his mind. The practical idealist may never have any feeling of the presence of God, but he is confident that God is with him as he seeks to do God's will. "There are diversities of gifts, but one Lord." However men find God, that conviction of an Unseen Friend in whose hands all the issues of life are secure is the pearl of great price, for which a man may well sell all that he has. George Matheson uttered the deepest longing of humanity when he prayed: "O Thou divine Spirit, whether Thou comest to me in sunshine or in rain, I would take Thee into my heart joyfully. Thou art Thyself more than the sunshine; Thou art Thyself compensation for the rain; it is Thee and not Thy gifts I crave; knock, and I shall open unto Thee."

"Lo, we have left all, and followed Thee. What shall we have therefore?" A quality of life rich enough to satisfy one's inmost self; a task commanding enough to call out all one's latent powers; an interpretation of life big enough to satisfy the mind; a fellowship with God real enough to satisfy the whole man. Rewards in heaven? Of course, but rewards in a heaven which need not be postponed until some future day. Rewards in a heaven which can begin today, and last forever. "This is eternal life, to know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."

# The Providence of Affinities

By James Moffatt

*And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to depart from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God; where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me and more also, if aught but death part thee and me.—Ruth* 1:16, 17.

WE read in this Hebrew idyl that Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, Naomi, with the farewell kiss of an oriental, long and passionate. She kissed Naomi and moved away. But Ruth clave to her, staying on in silence and clasping the older woman. Then, after her sister-in-law had withdrawn out of hearing, she poured forth this wonderful plea and promise, too sacred for any third party to overhear. It was a touch of characteristic tact and delicacy. Ruth was not one to make a display of her affection or to pride herself upon outshining Orpah. Genuine natures are never ostentatious. They are not on the lookout for credit before some audience. Now and then in apparently innocent remarks made by one person to another, or even in certain prayers to God, however finely they may sound, you can detect a pharisaic note of covert criticism upon other people, a subtle suggestion that others are not doing as much or doing so well. Protests of affection or of loyalty do insinuate, now and then, from the lips of good people, a taunt or censure of their neighbors. But Ruth was above this spirit of self-conscious virtue. She had not the slightest notion of posing as a dutiful daughter-in-law in contrast to Orpah. There is a genuine ring about her words.

*Pilloring Orpah*

As a matter of fact, the story does not mean to draw any contrast at all between Orpah and Ruth in the sense that the one was indifferent and the other unselfish. In our desire to honor the courage and charm of Ruth's devotion we moderns are apt to do some in-

justice to Orpah and thereby to miss one point of the tale. Poor Orpah is often contrasted with Ruth, as though she were a Goneril or Regan beside a Cordelia. Exhorters pillory Orpah for being hollow and formal. How warm and true Ruth is, we are told, and how cold and selfish is her sister-in-law! Even Cardinal Newman lent the sanction of his authority to this disparagement of Orpah. She kissed Naomi, he declares, "and went back to the world. There was sorrow in the parting, but Naomi's sorrow was more for Orpah's sake than for her own. It was the pain we feel when friends disappoint us and fall in our esteem. That kiss of Orpah was no loving token; it was but the hollow profession of those who use smooth words, that they may part company with us; with least trouble and discomfort to themselves." It is not so. There is not a hint in the idyl that any such sharp contrast divided the characters of Orpah and Ruth, and it is needless to blacken the one in order to bring out the beauty of the other. Orpah was not a cold-hearted creature, with more prudence than affection in her nature. In returning to her native land and refusing to be a burden to the older woman, she acted, according to oriental standards, wisely, and even—as both she and Naomi felt—in a true spirit of kindness. She had nothing to reproach herself with, and her mother-in-law had no cause to feel disappointed. Both Orpah and Ruth were *kind folk* as well as kinsfolk to Naomi.

No, the difference between the two is simply this, that the one was more lovable and loving than the other. What distinguished Orpah from Ruth corresponds not to the distinction between fair-weather friends and loyal hearts but to something much more subtle: it reflects a common experience and phase of our human relationships. Friendship is one of the pleasant mysteries of life. It brings to light what we know as affinities, the curious ties that draw us more to one than to another in our circle. We know perfectly well that among our relatives and friends some mean more to us than others do or will ever do. Even within the number of those who are scrupulously kind and loyal, there are some to whom we feel specially attracted and with whom we feel less reserve. With them, as we say, we have more in common.

### *The Orpah Type*

Others, of whom Orpah is a type, are absolutely faithful, so far as duty goes; indeed they may be demonstrative in their affection. We can rely upon them for any help which we might be inclined to ask. Only, there are some lengths to which we would not think of asking them to go. We don't expect so much from them as from others. Indeed, there are phases of life in which we do not dare to expect certain sacrifices from anyone. And yet there may be some in such an emergency who come forward of their own accord, insisting upon going all the way with us and upon sharing every step of the hard road. This is the inner circle

# A Christmas Prayer

By Robert A. Ashworth

ALMIGHTY God, our heavenly Father, who hast set the solitary in families and hast blessed the homes in which they dwell, we thank Thee for the return of the Christmas season and its joys, and for all the sacred memories that gather about it and hallow it. For the love of which Christmas is the symbol and the seal, love of God revealed in Christ and human love which is its reflection, we bring Thee thanks, as also for every opportunity to serve our fellows in that same spirit. We thank Thee, too, for the faith that is ours that the love which arches the years from enchanted childhood to hallowed age shall never die, but that beyond the shadows of time it shall be renewed again in Thy presence.

We bring Thee now the tribute of our praise for the gift for which we are daily grateful, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Savior, born in a manger, hailed by angels, welcomed by shepherd and king, friend of the noble and the lowly, and of little children everywhere, and God's authentic Word to man. We bless Thee for the Word made flesh who dwelt among us and whose glory we have beheld. Help us to find in Him the value and the meaning of all our relationships to one another and as with gifts and good wishes exchanged at Christmas time we keep our friendships in repair, may we not withhold our devotion and loyalty from Him who is the friend of all mankind and most deserves our love.

Let us not forget in the interchange of greetings and good will and the gifts we make as friend to friend the spirit of Him whose advent we observe. We would share our blessings with those to whom Christmas brings unusual burdens, those who serve in store or factory, the postmen at our doors and all who contribute to the holiday spirit. May we not by our thoughtlessness rob them of their due share of Christmas joy. We remember especially before Thee those who are dependent upon charity for their Christmas dinner and have no holiday joy because they are denied the privilege of work and are sorely tried because their children are deprived of life's necessities. May the servants of God never be content until they have built a world where such things shall be no longer possible.

To that end we bring to the Christ-child in his manger throne, whose right it is to rule in love and justice and who is to reign until all kingdoms have become His kingdom, the sovereignty of our lives. Amen.

of our friends and intimates, with whom we have a special affinity. They would feel almost insulted if we spoke about giving them trouble or if we hesitated to accept the help which their hearts prompt them to offer. From them we can take, upon occasion, what we could not bring ourselves to accept from anyone else. We can allow them to do things for us or to make sacrifices that in the case of ordinary relatives and friends would be out of the question. There is a point beyond which we cannot persist in dissuading them from their generous offers or in proudly trying to do without their aid. It is a divine instinct which moves them towards us and makes them capable of rising to the heights of sympathy.

Now Ruth is a type of such natures, attached natures that scorn the very idea of cost or trouble and only ask to be permitted to share our lot. *Ruth clave to her.* Why did not Orpah cling to Naomi too? Well, if you could answer that question, you would have solved the secret of human affinities, the mystery of friendship that selects one and passes by another. No doubt, Naomi had some of the qualities which draw out strong affection. She was not exacting or selfish towards her younger relatives, as older people sometimes tend to be, especially when they are in trouble. So far from putting her own interests forward, she thought more of the two girls than of herself; her uppermost thought was that their bright young lives must not be handicapped by a sad old woman like herself, without prospects or fortune. According to oriental standards she judged aright. She was wise and unselfish in planning to let her daughters-in-law have the chance of marrying again, and both felt her thoughtfulness. Again, she was a religious woman. "Thy God shall be my God," said Ruth. Her mother-in-law had impressed her with the reality of personal religion which is so attractive a feature for a sincere nature looking up to an older relative. These qualities told upon Ruth. They help to explain why her steadfastness was not a mere caprice.

### *"Ruth Clave to Her"*

But while they justify they do not account for the wonderful capacity of her affection any more than the warmth of the sunshine and the richness of the soil explain the full mystery of a rose. Ruth clave to her. If we want a foil to this warm generosity, we must turn not to Orpah but to the "citizens of Bethlehem." And when they—Ruth and Naomi together—"came to Bethlehem, all the city was moved about them, and the women said, Is this Naomi?" The town was moved, but no more. The women ran out to see their old fellow and friend, curious to notice the change in her. But none offered to help her. Naomi's return stirred some excitement for an hour, but if pity mingled with it, the pity for a woman who had evidently come down in the world, it did not turn to any channel of practical assistance. Nothing was done for Naomi or for Ruth. They were the talk of the town, but once the ripple of excitement died away, they were left to themselves. Then it was that Ruth's practical energy set to work. She proved that her affection for Naomi was more than the desire for companionship or the gush of a clinging nature that was self-interested. By her efforts she provided for herself and for the older woman to whom she had joined her fortunes.

### *"Fair-weather Friends"*

Here, then, is the outstanding feature of Ruth's choice and character. Adversity does sift our friends and acquaintances. "Fair-weather friends" are a commonplace for the cynic in every age. The world has too often witnessed how men and women fall off from those who are under some cloud of misfortune, how, as

James Moffatt

George Eliot says somewhere, "there is a chill air surrounding those who are down in the world, and people are glad to get away from them, as from a cold room." But, I repeat, Orpah was not one of these friends who drop away under the stress of misfortune. She was honestly willing to do her best, honestly unwilling to desert her mother-in-law. Only, Ruth was more unwilling.

What Naomi encountered in these two young women was not the tragedy of seeing the difference between a shallow and a deep nature but the mystery of affinities, the mystery of finding that between the rank and file of our friends and the inner circle there is an intangible and yet real distinction. Who can explain the reason for it? What accounts for the mysterious way in which God's providence sometimes moves by drawing one closer to us than another? The fact baffles us, but it constantly meets us. Jesus loved all his disciples but there was a beloved disciple, and he had an inner circle or group on whom he specially relied. No one can analyze these wonderful affinities that

knit life to life, but most of us experience them in one way or another. Even a parent, who may be scrupulously on his guard against favoritism, is conscious of being better understood by one child in the family than another. An older woman will sometimes tell you that while her daughters-in-law are all good to her, this one is more to her than another. Men will admit, to themselves at least, that in an emergency they would instinctively confide in one particular friend more than in others of their group who are perfectly willing and even ready to be of service.

It is one of God's providences which none can fathom, this selective instinct, this revelation of the more and the less in our friendships. Remember, it is not that you feel any trace of bitterness against the others as you appreciate the special tie with the one. You may be conscious that you have nothing to reproach them with. Only—Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clave to her. Both are considerate and tender. Both are eager to do what they can. There is no question of bad feeling or disappointment. But one can do more for you than the other. When all is said and done, this one is more to you than that, when the critical moment arrives and the strain comes. As far as ties of blood and duty go, both are equally true to you, but—how, you cannot tell—there is a diversity between them. It is a mystery and yet it is a reality of our connections in personal life. In the end it baffles us, and I suppose we must be content to leave it there.

### *In the Day of Adversity*

Not that it is needful to wait until privation or any pressure of life arises, in order to realize how our affinities are working. But in the day of adversity there is a special opportunity for testing and discovering those who mean most to us. So it was with Naomi long ago. "Entreat me not to leave thee," said Ruth to her, "nor to depart from following after thee." It is as though Ruth plead, "Nothing can hurt me so much as being separated from you, denied a share in what remains of life for you. I can bear anything but that. I offer nothing. I ask for nothing—only to be with you." What could the older woman answer to such a moving plea? She recognized in it the will of God. Yes, and the love of God also, the providence of God over his own, as their lives meet and touch within his varying order of cloud and sunshine. For when human loyalty is poured bright and full into our lives, so disinterested, so staunch, and so spontaneous, it is a revelation of God's own heart.

> The help each gives the other
> Is the strength that comes from Thee.

Often God interprets and conveys his goodness to us through a touch like that. In the thrill of gratitude and wonder which goes through us, when we see such a gift pressed upon us in our day of need, we cannot help, like St. Paul at Appii Forum, when the kindly Christians came uninvited to greet him as a stranger, thanking God and taking courage. Things may go from us, on which we had counted; life may be deprived of comforts, and the future may be threatening; but when some one near and dear to you steps forward to whisper, "Never mind, we have still one another"—when out of the circle of our friends we find this one or that telling us, "Here I am! Count on me!"—then, even as we are shamed by their generosity, what can we do but open our hearts to receive the rare gift and the God who has inspired it? We begin to understand then that these friends with whom our affinities have linked us, these men and women of the Ruth-spirit, have all along been caring for us for our own sake and not on account of themselves.

### *Damaging Our Friendships*

Such friends of the highest order are a rare possession. Let us see to it that we value them. For we may damage our friendships in life. We may damage them by our indolence, by failing to keep our friendships in repair. As, for example, when some friend who has been close to us goes abroad. How often, as Stevenson observes, he becomes to us "no more than a name, a reminiscence, and an occasional crossed letter." Or again, we hurt our friendships by being exacting. We make selfish demands on them, we expect too much from them, as if these friends were to revolve round our lives. But remember, we may also injure our friendships by being too independent. Independence is a great quality. We must learn to stand alone, and not to be craving sympathy at every turn. So much so, that we may pride ourselves upon not needing help. We shrink from giving our friends the opportunity of coming to our aid and entering into our troubles and difficulties. Whereas they have the right to be asked for help upon occasion, or at least to have their offers of aid accepted. And this is specially true of those who have been together through a long period, as Naomi and Ruth had been. It is not fair to stand aloof, now, after all that has passed. They may not be able to do very much, not as much perhaps as once they could, but the recollection of our common experiences in the past ought to give them the right to stand beside us in the present.

"Old folks and candles," says a modern novelist, "burn out slowly at the end. But before the end comes, they flicker up, once, twice, and again. The candle says, 'Think of me at my best. Remember me when I shone out thus and thus.' And the old man says to the old woman, and she says it back to him, 'Think of me in the glorious days when we were dawning on each other." Now you and I have to do that, long before we are old. People of the Ruth-spirit remember what they have been through with you already. And you dare not doubt their affection in the light of that. They have given you good reason to rely upon their loyalty and to trust the truth of the affinity that has drawn them and you together. That loyalty has not flickered out and it is not going to. No one must be too proud to rest upon it gladly and humbly, in the critical issue. Such noble unselfish souls ask only to be allowed to work and, if need be, suffer at our side, to be sharers of our interests, whatever happens.

How wonderful it is to find such affinities knitting life and life! When such loyalty throbs between one

and another, it is the very love of God himself moving human beings in his world. Sometimes we meet this experience in quarters where we never expected it. But in whatever degree or shape it finds us, surely it lifts us far above any hesitation. Such generosity and affection, bidding us count upon it to the end, stepping forward to wade with us when we are up to the lips in trouble of our own, is one of the divinest things in human life. We can say nothing. We hardly know how even to thank our friends. Indeed they do not want to be thanked. All we can do, at the revelation of such affinities, is, like Naomi and St. Paul, to thank God and take courage.

# How Big Is *Your* Christ?

By Robert A. Pollock

*Who is so great a God as our God? Psalm* 77:13.
*Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians* 1:27.

GEORGE ELIOT oftentimes allowed her moods to master the picture on the dark side, but few will question her portrait of the religious life of her day as she has drawn it in "The Mill on the Floss." "The religious life of the Dodsons consisted in revering whatever was customary and respectable; it was necessary to be baptized, else one could not be buried in the churchyard, and to take the sacrament before death, as a security against more dimly understood perils; but it was of equal necessity to have the proper pallbearers and well-cured hams at one's funeral and to leave an unimpeachable will. . . . Mr. Tulliver, though a regular church-goer, recorded his vindictiveness on the flyleaf of his Bible." In other words, the religion of these characters was just as large as the customs and traditions of the time—no larger. With the wonderful record of the Christ so close at hand, the church of that day had never been challenged by his bigness. It is small wonder that brilliant minds turned an arsenal of scathing words against it. Religion must have first of all a God large enough to meet man's needs.

## I

*The Gods of most religions are not large enough to meet the needs of man's expanding knowledge.* Some traveler has told us that in the mountains of Switzerland there is a high peak which at the closing of the day appears to be above the setting sun. At this hour the pilgrim may so stand at times that his shadow in exaggerated form is thrown against the sky. If such a story might have a doubtful scientific background, it is a true picture of the way that man has represented many of his gods. They are little more than the reflection of his enlarged and distorted self thrown against the sky.

The gods of the Romans came to have a degrading effect upon the people. Sometimes a young man would read the stories of the heroes of ancient Rome and would be inspired to higher ideals only to find them dissipated by Zeus, the "Father of lust and lies." Children would yield to temptation by saying, "May I, a lad, not do it, if Jupiter does it?" Philip Schaff quotes Minucius Felix when he says: "Even the form of the gods, how pitiable it is! Vulcan limps; Mercury has wings to his feet; Pan is hoofed; Saturn in fetters; and Janus has two faces, as if he walked backwards . . . the adultery of Mars and Venus; the lewdness of Jupiter with Ganymede. . . . The writers of tragedy and comedy alike take for their subjects the crimes or the miseries of the deity."

### *Unworthy Gods*

In Greece the deeper study of the gods had awakened such contempt that the very priests, when they met on the streets, laughed each other in the face. The deities of these lands were not able to meet the expanding knowledge and needs of a new day.

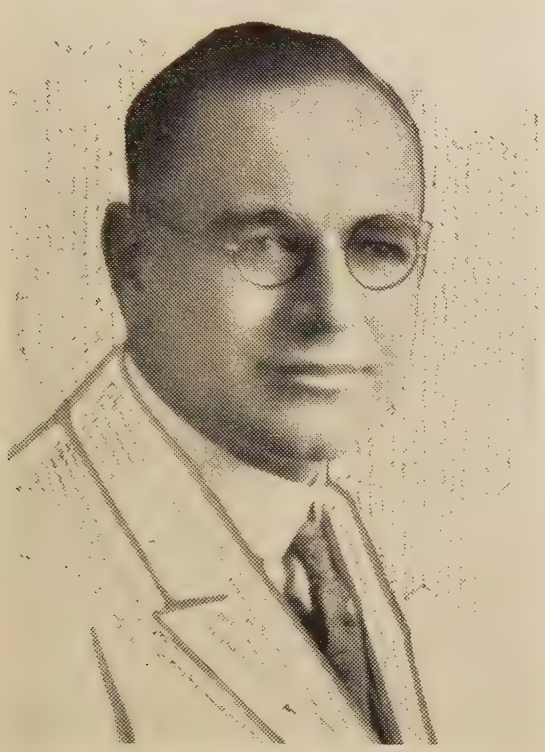
If these things were true of an ancient day, they are not less true of a vast part of the earth in our time. There are growing pains in India and China. The instinctive yearning and the poverty of supply is shown in this illustration from the pen of E. Stanley Jones. He had come from a great meeting one night to his train. He had been talking about the greatness of the Cross. About to board the train, he was attracted by a crowd gathered about a Swami and his chela or disciple. The people were bowed in adoration and some were kissing his feet. Mr. Jones turned to the chela and asked who his master was. He replied, "He is God. He will tell you anything you want to know." Mr. Jones looked closer and it was not hard to tell that the man was abnormal. His physical body did not coordinate. In conversation with a well educated Hindu on the same train, he asked why so many were ready to render worship to such a person. The student replied that things ought to be changed, but late that night Mr. Jones looked out and he saw that the educated Hindu was sitting with the Swami. His eyes were shining. He too had been caught in the spell of the weird and uncouth. Do not mistake the story. Mr. Jones would not have us understand that this represents the Indian religions at their best—perhaps more nearly at their worst. However, it still remains that India has a small sized god. Her growing knowledge is rebelling at it all and yet her instinctive heart cries out for some god, though it be little.

Christ had a difficult time to guard the people against a lowered ideal of himself. When he fed the five thousand the people were ready to crown him as king. They even followed him around the lake the next day in order that they might proclaim him as their ruler. They were ready to give allegiance to anyone who could multiply loaves and fishes as he did. What more could they want than a king who would be a great labor-saving device.

## II

*God in Christ is large enough for the world's need.* The need for something gloriously large in our lives

is never very far off. The forces of evil are tremendous. Many and many a man who thinks himself a Christian has yielded to despair. To most of us there come moods when we think the devil is stronger than God. More than one minister has said: "Why all this effort to change human nature? I have lived a long time and I once had the dream that human beings could be changed for better, but I have been disillusioned. You can't change human nature. Why all this fuss about making America Christian? Why the feverish attempts to carry the gospel to the ends of the



Robert A. Pollock

earth?" Such statements would have a place if some of us did not believe that there is a God big enough for that very task and big enough for every other unuttered need of our lives. Life would be unreasonable without it. Some years ago there was an old Chinese scholar who heard the story of God in Christ for the first time. It was told by an earnest missionary. When the story was finished the Chinese gentleman turned to his disciples and said, "Didn't I tell you there *ought* to be a God like that?"

Let us mention three claims inherent in this Christ of ours.

First, he has power to forgive sin. One day a paralytic was brought to Jesus. You know why his friends had come with him. They thought he might heal the man. They believed he was a wonder worker. Apparently the physical ailment of the man did not loom as the largest thing in the sight of Jesus. Christ said, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee." At once there was amazement and indignation. This Jesus was a blasphemer; "only God could forgive sins." Jesus did heal the man. He was deeply interested in his physical need, but he took opportunity to impress on the group that the bigger task was the release from sin and that he had come for that purpose. How much happier this must have made him than any material blessings he could have received. When the prodigal first thought of returning to his father he was prompted by hunger and the thought of comfort. He hoped to be restored to food; instead, he was restored to the father. How many there are in our world whose thoughts are mainly on health and food and clothing. They forget that there is something far better and that is restoration to the heavenly Father's love and care. In the calm moments of our deeper thought we know that there is no peace which will mean as much as the certainty of forgiven sin and restored fellowship. The heavenly Father through our Christ has done that for us.

### *Victor Over Death*

Second, he has power over death. When Mary and Martha sent for the Christ during the illness of their brother, they felt that he could do something in the way of restoration. As long as there was life there was hope. Perhaps Christ could help, but only until death should come. After the death of Lazarus they were, no doubt, glad to see him. He could bring those little words of sympathy which mean so much to us, but that was as far as his power could reach. They had not learned then, as many a one has not learned since, that Jesus *is,* in deed and truth, "the resurrection and the life."

When Jesus was in the garden on that memorable night, he had such powers of personality that the soldiers could take him only at his own acquiescence. During the trial his disciples forsook him and fled. They did not realize as yet how far-reaching was his power. A few days later, they stood by the open grave. The sealed stone had been rolled away. Here was something different. He might give himself on the cross, but death could not hold him. They saw a new power that was not afraid of the great conqueror. They went forth with the glad joy so eloquently voiced by St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

### *Christ and Today*

Third, he is as big as the challenging needs of the world. A little while back I was in New York city. I stood in the heart of the city at the five o'clock hour when those great buildings were releasing their masses of humanity. I hardly knew there were so many people in the world. As I looked at it all I wondered what chance the Church of Christ had against it. Then I thought of Peking and Calcutta, with their myriad population trained in traditions so strange to the Christian religion. What can the church do against a problem like that? Do we mean to say that this Christ told his disciples to go and preach and teach in these cities everywhere? Did he not die before such a task? Did

not Pilate break that little bubble of enthusiasm when he asked in scorn, "What is truth?" No! He conquered death and he is able to conquer the world. He can meet every problem of our time.

There is an incident in Bishop Mouzon's fine book, "Preaching with Authority," which has impressed me greatly. He tells the story of a man at a church service one night who disputed the pastor's sermon on sin. He laid the world condition to economic causes and said that if he had the opportunity, he would destroy the modern church and tear down most of the governments of the world. The man claimed to be a bolshevist and was very familiar with the writings of Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and others. He had a reason for his faith and was not the long haired belligerent so frequently pictured. Finally the pastor said to him, "If you had the choice on the one hand of being like Christ and of having society organized and motivated according to the spirit of Christ, and on the other hand, of being like Karl Marx, Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin and of having society controlled by their spirit, which type of life would you choose for yourself and for the world?" This was his answer: "If men would live it, I would give my life to see the Christian spirit control this world."

I am throwing out just a few suggestions concerning the power of our Christ. He is so large that he staggers any ideal we have ever had concerning him. But I ask, would a God any smaller suffice for the world's needs?

III

*How big is your Christ?* Christ may be everything we have mentioned and yet be far less than that to us personally. A little after the year 200 A. D., one of the Roman emperors had in his private sanctuary four or five statues of the gods and it was his desire to place along with these a statue of the Christ. How small a conception this man had of the Master!

When Jesus began his public ministry great crowds followed him and in the groups there must have been many business and professional leaders. They saw that the preaching of this man was working a moral reform. Zaccheus gave back ill-gotten gains. Matthew felt the pangs of a guilty conscience. Yes, this preaching was a good thing. This man was needed in Palestine, for business was bad and even business cannot go long without morals. Everybody was following Jesus. Then one day Jesus began to talk about a cross and self-denial and the forgiveness of sins. It was then the atmosphere changed. "Many turned back and walked no more with him." He had now become a dangerous radical.

There are plenty of people today who have laid hold of certain of Christ's principles. The adoption has cost them little and gained them much. They have dictated the terms as they thought. They have taken the Christ and have tried to fit him into the measure of their own stunted hearts. They have come as the rich young ruler came and asked the Christ to sit in a life in which Mammon was already crowned. They have not learned, as the rich young ruler found out to his sorrow—that Christ can come into a life only on his own high terms. *His* Christ would have been small—*the* Christ is large.

How big is your Christ? If *your* Christ were *the* Christ, could the world be saved? Are your motives such that the Christ could entrust his mighty program to you? There is a significant refusal in John 2:23, 24. John tells us that "many believed on his name when they saw the miracles which he did." Then the next verse: "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them because he knew all men." The word translated "commit" bears the translation "believe." "Many believed in Jesus, but Jesus did not believe in them."

Religion's all or nothing; it's no mere smile
O' contentment, sigh of aspiration, sir—
No quality o' the finelier tempered clay
Like its whiteness or its lightness; rather, stuff
O' very stuff, life of life, and self of self.

## *VERSE*

### *The Lost Christ*

YOUR skill has fashioned stately creeds,
But where is He, we pray—
The friendly Christ of loving deeds?
He is not here today.

With sentences that twist and tease,
Confusing mind and heart,
You forge your wordy homilies
And bid us heed your art.

But where is He—or can you tell?—
Who stilled the brothers' strife,
Who urged the woman at the well
To live a better life?

Where is the Saint of Galilee,
Crude Peter's faithful guide;
The man who wept at Bethany
Because His friend had died?

We weary of your musty lore
Behind dead walls of gray;
We want His loving words once more
By some Emmaus way.

Give us the Christ who can bestow
Some comfort-thought of death.
Give us a Christ our hearts can know—
The Man of Nazareth.

THOMAS CURTIS CLARK.

### *Bethlehem*

I SHALL not tarry over scrolls
That chart the planets of the night;
Nor follow paths of endless goals,
The ordered orbs of Heaven's light;
Nor shall I halt with sense and mind
At palace, porch or merchant's mart:
My caravan shall press to find
A Savior for my hungry heart.

HARRY WEBB FARRINGTON.

# The Editor's Page

## The Event of the Month

BY ALL ODDS the most important action of our government in its foreign policy since the signing of the peace pact is the decision of President Hoover to consult with the League of Nations on the Manchurian crisis and to cooperate with the league in whatever action may be jointly agreed upon. The sight of General Dawes, our ambassador to Great Britain, in Paris, representing the United States at the special session of the league's council is a heartening development. It required courage for the President to break the taboo which has too long kept official America from so much as recognizing the existence of the league. The present step is full of significance and promise. At Geneva, in October, the President appointed Mr. Prentiss Gilbert to sit in conference with the council on the basis of the Kellogg pact to which all members of the league as well as the United States are signatories. Now Mr. Dawes is representing us. And so far it is the peace pact, not the covenant of the league, that has been invoked. This use of the *machinery* of the league for carrying out the responsibilities of all nations under the pact, marks a new day in world cooperation for peace.

**United States Works with The League of Nations**

## The Book of the Month

THE MORAL CRISIS IN CHRISTIANITY. *By Justin Wroe Nixon. Harper & Brothers,* $2.00.

WHAT has been the fate of the ideals searchingly and systematically set forth by Walter Rauschenbusch in the first decade and a half of the twentieth century? This prophet and saint, who became the symbol of a world-transforming religion, died during the great war when the church which he loved and which he had so deeply stirred with his books and his spirit, proved how frail was its grip upon his principles. Dr. Nixon was his pupil in Rochester Theological seminary. Later he became his colleague, and at his death his professorial successor. Still later he became pastor of the Brick Presbyterian church of Rochester where he is today. In memory of Rauschenbusch a lectureship foundation has just been established at the seminary and Dr. Nixon was invited to inaugurate it with a series of lectures which are now offered to the public in this book. I have read these chapters with mixed feelings of excitement, enthusiasm, satisfaction and freshened faith. The author comes up squarely to the issue. He sees clearly that Christianity faces a brand new ethical problem today, upon whose solution depends the continuance of modern civilization and of Christianity as a vital faith. Dr. Nixon is an intellectual realist. His diagnosis of the modern temper is searching and vivid, but unlike many of our teachers he is equally realistic in his constructive proposals. There is a virility about his thinking which is only matched by the virility of his faith. Every page of this book grips the reader. His book will fertilize and inspire our preaching as Rauschenbusch's writings used to do.

## A Thought for the Month

WE MUST NOT EXPECT too much from our philosophers. They are working at levels which lie so deep below our actual experience that they cannot help us very much in the immediate business of living. In the long run they help us, (or harm us), but only in the long run. Right now, in my present need, I must not expect the language of philosophy to be of much use to me. My faith in God must be a far richer thing than any philosopher can express. If when I consciously need to draw upon God for help—in sorrow or disappointment, in weakness or perplexity—I limit my thought of God to the definitions which the philosophers have devised, I shall find God quite a hollow and unsatisfying object of devotion. I can hardly pray to that Power not ourselves that makes for righteousness; nor to That upon which man depends for the supreme values; nor to the Determiner of destiny; nor to the Life Process itself, idealized and personified; nor to the Complete Conceptual Realization of the realm of ideal forms. All these are philosophers' definitions of God. But it is obvious, and most philosophers will agree, that they have reached their definitions by emptying experience of all its concrete content. It is the business of philosophy to do just that—to give us a God who is the most abstract God imaginable. But the God with whom we have communion in prayer must be the most richly real God imaginable, not the most abstract imaginable. Philosophers may add to our faith in God, but we must not let them substitute their abstraction for our reality. Sages and saints and poets are more adequate teachers than philosophers. Even a little child can show us something of God which philosophy cannot show and, when it knows its own limitations, does not profess to show. Our own hearts, also, can be trusted to tell us the truth. And the disclosure of God which Jesus of Nazareth made in his life and words, and in his death, is so rich in meaning and so available for human use as to be incommensurable with anything any philosopher, as a philosopher, ever dreamed of.

**A God to Whom We Can Pray**

Charles Clayton Morrison

# Why I Make Pastoral Calls

By Frederick K. Stamm

PASTORAL calling by Protestant ministers is becoming a lost art. It has been surrendered to the telephone, the church visitor, and the newspapers. Oliver Goldsmith's parson, who was prompt at every call, and who "watched and wept, prayed and felt for all," has given way to the spiritual expert who has appointed office hours and waits for his parishioners to call.

According to the prevailing view of both congregations and ministers, the real need is for preachers, not doorbell ringers. The history of preaching in Protestantism is a noble one, and I would not take away any of its glory. Deep in the soul of every minister there is a justifiable pride in being an able preacher. I suppose, if the truth were known about any of us, we would rather die believing that our greatest contribution had been made through the pulpit, not in our pastoral endeavors. I am quite sure that many churches would not look twice at a candidate because of his ability as a pastor. What they want is an "outstanding preacher."

### • *Victimized by Big Things*

The plaudits of the multitude are reserved for the preacher, and from what I know of one minister, most of us are human enough to look with enviable eyes upon the preacher who holds the center of the stage. And yet, I am old-fashioned enough to assert that this over-emphasis upon the preacher to the exclusion of the willingness on the part of the minister to wear out shoe-leather is a gross misreading of the needs of humanity. This is true whether the church is large or small, or whether the church has a staff of workers or not.

We think we ought to be doing big things, and we are victimized by big things. We used to talk in thousands of dollars, now we talk in millions. Like the Tower of Babel, our buildings must "reach unto heaven." Every village must disfigure its beauty with factories. Every city must double its population regardless of the fact that it does not therefore breed better people. Even the church is eager to engage in movements which flourish for a while like a green bay tree, having "printer's ink for sap and being stricken by the blight of statistics."

I call for several reasons. First of all, I like people and want to know them. It is satisfying to be able to call people by their names. Doubtless Jesus was not thinking in terms of the twentieth century minister and his congregation when he talked about

Frederick K. Stamm

a shepherd and his flock. But what better term can one use when it comes to the relationship between the minister and his church? To minister to people one must know them. A church service is a poor place for a minister to become acquainted with people. He may know their faces, but he does not know *them,* and he can't associate their faces with their homes or with anything about them unless he sees them in their own homes. I've got to know who people are, where they live, and, with most of them, the business in which the head of the family is engaged.

### • *Knowing the Pastor As He Is*

And members of the church must know me. They can't become acquainted with me in church. They know whether I'm good looking or homely, whether my voice is resonant or raspy, whether I'm tall or short, married or a bachelor. But they don't know *me.* They don't know whether I'm sympathetic or cold; whether they can count on me in trouble. Men and women like to know their minister, who he is, and what he is. They will know me better if they can talk with me face to face in their own homes. Dr. Charles E. Jefferson said to me: "Your people may admire you as a preacher; they will love you only as they know you as a pastor."

Then, too, I call because there are a number of people in every congregation who must be nursed into religion. I mean nursed—not coddled, or cajoled, or slapped on the back. They've not come along far in religion. They belong to the church, but they don't know much about the implications of Christianity. They don't get much out of hearing the preacher preach or pray about religion. Not that they are unintelligent. Indeed, the most intelligently informed on many matters are sometimes the veriest babes in matters of religion. They don't get religion by hearing it talked about. They must get it, if they get it at all, by seeing a life. They must see it work and find it expressed in a personality.

The gracious act of a minister whom I know, of going to the lonely grave of a pauper in the dead of winter and reading the committal service, is still rehearsed in that community as a memorial to him. Any lovely deed by the minister, performed out of the purity of his heart, will go farther than a dozen sermons. It is the minister laying his life against another life, that helps some of these nursing babes begin to understand what he says on Sunday.

### • *People Are People —Everywhere*

Again, I call because people expect it—that is, most of them do. Even those who say they don't, nevertheless feel a bit neglected if the minister does not call. I have never yet found the doors of the members of my church closed to me. The fact that people in a city barricade themselves behind the walls of an apartment house, at the very top of the elevator, from which position they can inform the door-man that they are not at home, might seem to indicate that they do not care to be disturbed by a call, even from the minister. But the fact that a woman in a private home sends her maid to answer the bell, or that Mr. Jones does not go to the door in his shirt-sleeves, is no indication that they are one bit different from other people.

People are people whether they live in a country village or in a large city. They have the same longings, fears, hopes, aspirations, loves, hates. They have the same hunger for fellowship. The easiest place in the world to live

fe of solitude is in a big city. And ot of people are lonely. Certainly y have their circle of friends. They end the theater, play bridge, do ir round of social affairs. They m happy. And they are—happy as ngs can make them happy. But they :d something else.

### • *The Tragedy of Isolation*

I can't cut myself off from even the ost superficial people because I may led to believe that they are per-ctly satisfied when I do not call. e shed our tears over the terrific litude of Robinson Crusoe and ioch Arden, and in turn Crusoe and rden could urge many to weep over emselves; for their temporary soli-de was as nothing compared to the rmanent solitude which people liv-g on top of each other have marked t for themselves.

It ought to be part of a minister's e to become a society of one for the evention of individual isolation. lling is serious business. I don't ke myself so seriously, but the busi-ss is serious. I go to render a rvice, to talk shop, to offer a prayer, dry a tear, to bring a smile, to al-fear, to inspire hope, to set minds a different tangent, to live a while a house of friendliness.

Once I called on a woman who is ill. I had never seen her. When e heard she was about to receive a ll from the minister she remarked a friend: "If that minister makes a isance of himself by offering a long ayer, I'll scream." I knew nothing the remark until long after she d her husband united with the urch. Many of the finest people om I have received into the church ring these years have been hand-ked—the result of a call.

### • *People Must Tell Some One*

The giving of oneself earnestly to s important part of a minister's rk will naturally have some reac-ns. What are they? What do I d?

In the first place, I make some real ends. They confide in me and tell things they don't tell other people. ey must tell some one, and the nister is a good safety-valve. He es not tell. It becomes a sort of nfessional. They come to know t my interest in them is not sel-, but is born out of a real desire help in time of need. It may be ess, or a family problem—a boy or l gone wrong, a faithless wife or sband; it may be financial worry. can be any one of a multitude of airs concerning the peace and hap-ess of the home.

f a pilgrimage is made to that ne during a critical period I can end on it that I have grappled those folks to me with hooks of steel. And above all, they are bound fast to the church so that they realize that the church is not merely an institution which looks to them for support, but a house of refuge and a temple of God. To them the minister stands for all that represents the fulness of the gospel of love. No greater joy can come to anyone than the joy that comes to a minister when he is met with a friendly greeting and a warm handshake from some member of a family with whom he has gone the second mile in time of need.

"Let us be kind to one another," Ian Maclaren used to say, "for most of us are fighting a hard battle." Dr. A. J. Gossip tells us how, after he had succeeded Maclaren, he had found that Maclaren had lived out his dictum. He "heard nothing of his sermons, though he was a mighty preacher; but wherever there had been a bairnie ill in his time, twenty years afterward they remembered in these homes the man who spent long hours pouring out wonderful stories to hot restless folk, too ill to look at pictures, sick of all toys, or peevish and fretted by their crumby beds."

### • *Twelve Hundred Calls A Year*

I find, too, that I can go to a home in an hour of emergency with a good deal more grace if I have been there before under normal conditions. About a year ago, I journeyed over to the Madison Avenue Presbyterian church to have a little chat with Dr. Buttrick. He told me two significant things. First of all, he said that he thought the work which Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin did in that church was unique and outstanding and that the pastoral calls of Dr. Coffin played a large part in his successful ministry. Dr. Buttrick confirmed what I had previously heard about Dr. Coffin—that he made about twelve hundred calls annually. He then added: "I am doing the same thing. I make about a thousand calls a year, and during this past year, the entire staff made a total of thirty-two thousand calls."

The second thing he told me was a personal experience. He said he called twice on a wealthy woman and was met each time by the butler dressed like a Swiss guard—with the information, "Her ladyship is not receiving today." Sometime later, he picked up the morning paper at the breakfast table and noticed that this woman's son had committed suicide in the bathroom. He went immediately to the home, and "her ladyship" received him, and was glad to do so. He said: "I could go to that home in the midst of that tragedy with a good deal more grace than I could have gone had I not called before, and it gave me an opportunity to speak a few plain words."

I'll not skimp my preaching, but I'll keep on calling. I'll go about finding a message in good hearts, in hard hearts, in hypocritical hearts, upon which I can ring the changes of the gospel in behalf of that portion of people to whom I minister, who are really looking for a gospel which stabs the conscience awake and makes the heart receptive to the birth of a new spirit.

# TALKING IT OVER

A DEPARTMENT *of* COMMENT *and* CRITICISM

## *An Announcement*

IT has been a growing observation, ever since The Christian Century Pulpit was founded, that some opportunity ought to be given to our readers to comment upon or criticise the sermons or other statements which appear in these pages. We need not only what William Allen White, in his famous Emporia Gazette, calls "The Wailing Wall"—a place where complaints may be registered—but a free-for-all page of our readers' opinions. There are times when even the kindliest disposed reader wants to "lick the editor," but if the editor provides no space for such entertainment the reader has to give place unto wrath which, like many other scriptural injunctions, is difficult to obey.

Beginning with the January issue we will devote a page to our readers' comments and criticisms—and we will not be too modest to include an occasional word of appreciation, too! This department of correspondence will provide a vent, an outlet, for ideas that are stimulated by the sermons or by the discussion of pastoral problems or the editorials which appear here. This is a minister's magazine. Only ministers read it—and members of ministers' families. Questions relating to the task of the ministry may be treated with entire frankness. Naturally only a small percentage of the letters received can be used, but we shall try to show a generous spirit in making the selection. We shall be glad to receive in an early mail any comments on the sermons in this issue, or on Dr. Stamm's invaluable statement about pastoral calling, or on the editor's remarks: Let us talk it over!

# WHO'S WHO in THIS ISSUE

*As a teacher in the American university*, Beirut, Rev. HAROLD LEONARD BOWMAN began his professional career, having recently graduated from Coe college, in 1910. After three years in Beirut, Dr. Bowman returned to America, and at once entered McCormick (now Presbyterian) theological seminary. Completing his work there, he accepted a call to the Woodlawn Park Presbyterian church, Chicago. Since 1920 he has been minister at the First Presbyterian church, Portland, Ore.

*Bishop* JAMES E. FREEMAN spent fifteen years in the business field, before entering upon religious work. He received his theological education at Seabury Divinity school, Kenyon college and Brown university. He began his preaching career as rector of St. Andrew's Memorial church, Yonkers, N. Y., and from there went to St. Mark's church, Minneapolis. The Church of the Epiphany at Washington, D. C., was his next charge and in 1923 he was consecrated as bishop of Washington.

*When he came to the Pilgrim Con*gregational church, Lewiston, Ida., in 1923, Rev. HUBERT N. DUKES had enjoyed unusually wide educational advantages. Upon the completion of his college courses, he entered Yale Divinity school, where he graduated. He also holds a degree from Columbia university, and has studied in Union seminary. Dr. Dukes spent more than six years in Idaho, and something over a year ago came to First Congregational church, Jackson, Mich., where he now ministers.

*It seems superfluous to introduce Dr.* JAMES MOFFATT, the famous textual critic of the New Testament, who has translated not only the New Testament, but also the Old; whose name has become a household word because he has given us an English Bible suitable to the modern age. Dr. Moffatt was brought from the University of Glasgow, in 1927, to Union theological seminary, where he occupies the chair of professor of church history.

*Since* 1925, Rev. MORGAN PHELPS NOYES has been minister of First Presbyterian church, Brooklyn, N. Y.; he is also a teacher in the homiletics department at Union seminary. Before going to Brooklyn was pastor of the Presbyter church at Dobbs Ferry, N. Y. Noyes' education was received Yale university, where he grad ated in 1914; at Union semina where he graduated in 1920, and Columbia, where he received M. A. in 1922. For a number years Dr. Noyes was assistant m ister at Madison Avenue Presby rian church, New York city.

*For more than fourteen years, R* ROBERT A. POLLOCK has been p tor of the First United Presby rian church of Denver, one of old and honored churches of Co rado. In recent years Dr. Poll has held high positions in the cou sels of his denomination. He h had a special interest in you movements and recently was cha man of the National Convention Young People held at Mt. La Park, Md.

*Dr.* ROBERT A. ASHWORTH *is the e* itor of the Baptist, published Chicago.

*Rev.* FREDERICK K. STAMM *is minis* of the Clinton Avenue Congreg tional church, Brooklyn, N. Y.

# TITLES AND TEXTS

## What Pulpit Readers Are Preaching About

EDWARD A. MOHUS, JR., Presbyterian, Greenville, Ala. "The Eternal Stranger." John 1:26b—"There standeth one among you whom ye know not."

F. W. MCDERMOTT, Community Church of Hannibal, N. Y. "America First." Gal. 2:14—"If thou, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles and not as do the Jews, how compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"

WALLACE W. ANDERSON, Congregational, Manchester, N. H. "Spiritual Eclipse." Matt. 6:23—"If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness."

PHILIP S. WATERS, Memorial Methodist, White Plains, N. Y. "The Law and the Profits." Ezek. 18:4—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Mark 8:36—"What shall it profit a man?"

F. J. FITCH, First Baptist, Ion Mich. "The Madness of Mirth Eccl. 2:2—"I said of laughter, is mad."

CHARLES S. OTTO, Methodist, Ne ton, Mass. "Future-Minded Prov. 29:18—"Where there is vision, the people perish."

WALTER H. NORTH, Country Cl Congregational, Kansas City, M "False Worship of the True Goo 1 Sam. 15:22—"To obey is bett than sacrifice."

KING D. BEACH, First Methodi Baltimore. "Following the Visi Splendid." Exod. 25:40—"See th thou make them after the patte which has been showed thee in t mount."

WILLIAM R. HOLDER, First Chri tian, Bonham, Tex. "Froze Assets." Matt. 19:22—"He we away sorrowful, for he had gre possessions."

WILLIAM PIERSON MERRILL, Bri Presbyterian, New York city. "T Great Hope for This Nee World." Matt. 6:10—"Thy kin dom come; thy will be done."

FOR YOUR SERMON TITLE AND TEXT

.....
*Title of sermon*

.....
*Text used (Write out the text)*

.....
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.....
*Name of church*

.....
*Address*

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# Preaching in a Time of Depression

Dr. Ralph W. Sockman, of New York City, recently declared that he believes the pulpit faces today its greatest opportunity of a generation, "and yet it is in danger of forfeiting its chance for real service."

Most ministers will agree with Dr. Sockman in this statement, and they will no doubt join in testimony that this is a most difficult time to preach; to present the message that will really help their congregations to surmount the difficulties of this present day of depression and discouragement.

The chief purpose of The Christian Century Pulpit has been from the beginning actually to *help* its minister readers in their pulpit and parish problems. During the year 1932 it will endeavor to lend guidance in the difficult ministerial task of "preaching in a time of depression."

For the January issue, especially, the Editor has secured for publication six sermons from pulpit leaders, and every one of these sermons has actually been preached, and each has special reference to the present situation. Among them are sermons by Dr. Henry Sloane Coffin, Dr. Ernest Fremont Tittle, Dr. Charles W. Gilkey, Bishop Henry K. Sherrill—and others.

It is not proposed to tell preachers how to preach in this difficult time, but to present sermons which will indicate just how certain ministers are actually preaching to their people. By the publication of such sermons, the Pulpit believes that it will be giving a lead to thousands of other ministers who greatly need inspiration and guidance today.

***Do not miss the JANUARY number—***
***Do not let your subscription lapse!***

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## The New Department "PREACHER PROBLEMS"

will be found in this December issue. Next month Rev. Albert Edward Day, of Christ Church (Methodist), Pittsburgh, will contribute an article entitled "By Beds of Pain"—treating the important subject of calling on the sick.


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